

Tasha de Vasconcelos

'for country not self'

Supermodel and Actress
Founder of AMOR (Aide Mondiale Orphelins Réconfort)
European Union Ambassador for humanitarian causes



Africa in her heart

Tasha de Vasconcelos was born in Beira, in Mozambique, her father an engineer, Fernando João de Vasconcelos Mota e Cunha, a member of one of Portugal's oldest families, a descendant of King Alfonso III of Leão, and a British mother Jacqueline, a King of Scotland of the XI century, and of a family from the north of France. Tasha and her sister Pamela – two years her junior – enjoyed an idyllic life by the side of the ocean, in one of Portugal's oldest colonies. They grew up amongst the animals of her grandfather's farm: not least the horses -a particular passion of this highly accomplished horsewoman.

However at only 8 years old, Tasha had to face the cruelty of the civil war and revolution which tore her country apart, followed just five years later by that of Rhodesia – now Zimbabwe – where they had fled. At 13 she and her family moved first to Portugal, and then on to Canada.

A Heritage of Beauty

There she embarked on a new life. She joined the University of British Columbia where she studied international relations. She was spotted at 19 and quickly signed up by Elite Models.

She became the model of choice of some of the greatest photographers in the world of fashion, such as **William Klein, Peter Lindbergh, Michel Comte, Albert Watson, Patrick Demarchelier** -and **Steven Meisel**. He took her under his wing and offered Tasha her first cover spread in the prestigious Italian Vogue. She grew into a model of international renown, a member of a small elite group who graced the covers of fashion's major magazines, amongst them **Vogue, Elle, and Tatler**.

She worked too for some of the worlds most prestigious brands, such as **Balenciaga, Calvin Klein, Escada, Ralph Lauren, Van Cleef & Arpels, Dolce & Gabbana** and appeared on the catwalks of such celebrated designers as **Armani, Dior, Lacroix, Ungaro, Valentino, Versace, and Yves Saint Laurent**. Meanwhile she continued to pursue her studies, and in 1998 received her Diploma in International Strategy from the Centre for Strategic and Diplomatic Studies in Paris.

2010 saw the publication of her autobiography, "**Beauty as a weapon**" and she was also the subject of a documentary "**La belle humanitaire**" devoted to her and her work.

In the World of Film

1998 she was cast in the role of Inès in the film '**Riches, Belles etc.**' playing alongside Claudia Cardinale and Anouk Aimée. She enjoyed the experience so much that she decided to take further steps into the world of acting.

With perseverance and determination, and wanting to be more than a glossy image on a page, she studied at the Cours Florent in Paris, at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London and at the Actors' Studio in Los Angeles.

In 1999 she landed the role of Lauren, the liberated female lead in the BBC sitcom, '**Perfect World**'. Appearances followed in the series '**Relic Hunter**' and '**Sunburn**' – again both for the BBC.

In 2001, Tasha performed in the CBS TV remake of the Agatha Christie classic, Murder on the Orient Express, alongside Alfred Molina and Leslie Caron, and then returned to cinema in '**Largo Winch**'.

That same year she was on stage in Tennessee Williams' '**Camino Real**' at the Tristan Bates Theatre in London.

2002 found her cast in the fantasy film '**Dinotopia**' before playing opposite the Mexican star Gael Garcia Bernal in '**Dot the I**' which was warmly received at both the Deauville and Sundance festivals.

2003 saw her involved in the big-budget Anglo-American film '**Johnny English**' directed by Peter Howitt. Tasha acted alongside Rowan Atkinson, the singer Natalia Imbruglia and John Malkovich in this film about a very poor substitute for James Bond, played by Atkinson (otherwise known as Mr Bean).

In 2008 she acted alongside French actors Richard Berry and Cristina Reali in the TV comedy '**Une Suite Pour Deux**' made for TF1.

A humanitarian to the core

With a natural generosity, Tasha has always had a heart for helping and supporting others, but it is on the ground that she finds her true calling, her *raison d'être*. Born herself in Africa she has always been involved in supporting children, and has a ten-year record in humanitarian work. Like her inspiration, Audrey Hepburn, Tasha knows how to use her contacts and reputation in the cause of humanitarian concerns. Alongside her physical resemblance to this 50's icon, she shares her altruism and generosity of heart, especially for children for whom she has a particular affection.

In 1996 she decided to reacquaint herself with her roots, by going back to the land of her birth, and found herself in South Africa working for the **Nelson Mandela Children's Fund**, followed by a further visit the following year.

1999 saw her working as a **UNICEF Goodwill Volunteer** supporting children suffering from malnutrition in Bolivia.

2001 she went to Algeria on a mission with UNICEF to help Algerian children victims of the war.

In 2005 in Mozambique with **UNAIDS**, as 'Special Campaigner for Children' against HIV/AIDS in Africa she again made a further mission to Africa.

In this same year she received an honorary award from **UNESCO** for her humanitarian commitment.

The AMOR Organisation:

In 2006, she created her own organisation **AMOR –(Aide Mondiale Orphelins Réconfort)** supported by Prince Albert II de Monaco. She received particular support from the American actor Paul Newman.

AMOR's aim is to see significant reductions in global infant and maternal mortality rates, through working both with trusted local agencies and international partners. In achieving this AMOR has two particular goals: to provide medical services to mothers at risk, and appropriate care for orphans.

On the 15th April 2009 Tasha opened Amor's first project, a maternity unit in Malawi, financed, built and equipped entirely by **AMOR**.

On October 9th 2009 President José-Manuel Barroso asked her to become the European Union's public face for humanitarian causes, just as Bono is for the UN.

October 15th 2009 saw Tasha invited to contribute to a 'Speaking Out' session at the World Women's Forum in Deauville.

Finally, on 11th November 2009, Prince Albert of Monaco inaugurated the special care wing of the AMOR maternity unit in Malawi. On that visit Tasha was accompanied by Dr. Cécile Delval in her role as official representative of the Institut Pasteur.

The Institut Pasteur:

On 29th April 2009 Tasha de Vasconcelos was named as the official **Ambassador of the Institut Pasteur** –a first for this renowned international leader in medical research. 'I take on this mission with much humility,' she said on the day of her nomination, 'I appreciate particularly the humanitarian aims of the Institut Pasteur, whose work has the sole aim of improving the health of human beings.'

Humanitarian commitment is second nature to this young woman of European origins, born in Africa. She is a perfect embodiment of today's modern woman. A citizen of the world, she divides her time between Monaco, her adopted home, and the rest of the world, which she travels across to accomplish her goals and awaken consciences. Active and dynamic, committed and generous, she speaks five languages fluently (English, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Italian). She competes in Pentathlon, is an accomplished rider, and has been a keen sportswoman since her earliest days. But above all she holds Africa in her heart.

The European Union

On the 8 Mars 2010 (International Women's day), President José-Manuel Barroso gave to Tasha de Vasconcelos her new mission as ambassador for European Union for humanitarian causes. Her mandate lasts through until 2015.



Autobiography

2010 saw the publication of her autobiography "Beauty as a Weapon" published by Michel Lafon and she was also the subject of a documentary "La Belle Humanitaire" devoted to her and her humanitarian work.

Peter Lindbergh

